

The Planner's Page

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

Federal Transportation Laws and Regulations- SAFETEA-LU Highlights

SAFETEA-LU amends the metropolitan and statewide transportation planning requirements (23USC134 & 23USC135). Compliance with the new law will be requisite for federal approvals or funding agreements for transportation plans, programs or projects. A phase-in time period requirement applies. Although transportation plan, program and project selection process continues, some changes have been enacted to "improve and evolve" the process. Planning highlights follow:

- The minimum update cycle for metropolitan transportation plans shall be at least every four years in nonattainment/maintenance areas (It is & will stay at least every five years elsewhere). Plans shall include operational management strategies.
- A TIP/STIP shall have at least a four year period and be updated at least every four years.
- **Consultation requirements are expanded** for all transportation plans and TIP/STIPs. State planning and programming is to include coordination with state trade, economic and related multistate planning. State and metropolitan consultation for long range plans shall include as appropriate: land use, natural resource, environmental, conservation and historic (state, tribal or local) agencies and involve comparison with their plans/inventories. With respect to participation by (all) interested parties in all planning and programming, representatives of walking and biking facility users, and representatives of the disabled shall be among those who shall have reasonable opportunity to comment.
- Environmental **mitigation plan** activities and locations of *federal and state* agencies need identification and discussion in all transportation plans. **This adds a new step** prior to the draft stage for preliminary consultation and the development of the mitigation section.
- A public involvement **participation plan** now is required for including all interested parties in development and review of each metropolitan area's transportation plans (metro plans only).
- **Web and visual tools shall be used to the maximum extent practicable** (draft & final info).
- **Beginning July 1, 2007, full compliance to SAFETEA-LU standards is required** for federal, state or MPO approval actions on a new or modified transportation plan or program:
 - ❖ Transportation plans and programs in development may be completed under TEA-21 requirements and schedules, but upgrades to SAFETEA-LU are encouraged ASAP.
 - ❖ States or MPOs opting to implement SAFETEA-LU requirements prior to July 1, 2007 must satisfy all the provisions in order to benefit from extended update cycles.

Visit the FHWA web page at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu/index.htm>, or contact Sam Curling at Samuel.Curling@VDOT.Virginia.gov or (804) 786-4216 for more SAFETEA-LU planning information.

Federal Transportation Laws and Regulations- FY06 Transportation Appropriations

Congress is working on the appropriations legislation that controls federal government funding and actions for the federal 2005-2006 fiscal year. Information on the transportation appropriation proposals is contained in bill [HR 3058](#). HR 3058 has relevance to planning. In the Senate version, transportation funding might be reduced (to help offset recent increases in other federal program spending). Also, use of federal transportation funds might be prohibited where a government seeks to use eminent domain for land development that primarily benefits private entities. This is accompanied by important wording that would allow support of certain development categories which benefit or serve the general public. A joint House/Senate conference committee now will look to resolve differences in the House and Senate versions of the bill. Meanwhile, [HJR 68](#) governs continuing appropriations for the present 2005-2006 federal fiscal year (that started this October).

Federal Transportation Laws and Regulations- Proposed Rule on Project Authorizations and Agreements

On July 11, 2005, FHWA proposed to revise the regulations on federal project authorizations and agreements (at 23CFR630) with stricter standards and requirements in project management and administration. [Their proposal](#) would affect all new and modified FHWA agreements, including federal transportation planning agreements funded with the PL and SPR programs. FHWA would require more accurate cost and time completion schedules, and prompter administrative processing than before. A specific project/activity date for completion would be required (including for SPR or PL activities). Timeline requirements would apply in prompt processing of project billings and claims. The project/activity account would be expected to be closed within 90 days of that completion date. States would have responsibility to see that third party contracts & agreements provide for timely billing & complete processing of final claims following completion of work by the third party. The proposal also would require promptly deobligating federal funds on delayed or canceled projects (inactive 12 consecutive months), and promptly revising funding obligations when cost estimates decrease by 10% or \$100,000. FHWA proposes that the resulting deobligated funds would be redirected to fund-pending yet otherwise ready projects in the same region.

Joint FHWA/FTA (SAFETEA-LU) Interim Planning Guidance

On September 2, USDOT issued [interim guidance for implementing SAFETEA-LU provisions on planning](#). The guidance discusses key SAFETEA-LU provisions and expresses initial FHWA/FTA thoughts on how the new federal law is to be implemented. FHWA and FTA say that they soon expect to update the regulations on state and metropolitan transportation planning (these date to 1993). The update to the regulations should occur by spring 2006.

Fiscal Constraint

FHWA issued a guidance update on planning and fiscal constraint requirements in July. Although *none of the content of this material is new* (at [Fiscal Constraint- STIPs, TIPs and Metro LRPs](#)), it provides interesting details for officials involved in STIP and metropolitan planning. Like a comprehensive budget, the revenues and expenses need to financially balance for all existing and future capital improvement, operation and maintenance program projects. Under federal law (23 USC 116), satisfying maintenance needs of the federal-aid systems is a minimal and priority obligation that all states are expected to meet as well as financially balance. Revenues must be "available or committed"

for the projects to be implemented in the first two immediate years, and "reasonably expected to be available" if they are to be implemented in the later years. A few highlights are provided below.

"Fiscal constraint requires that revenues in transportation planning and programming (Federal, State, local, and private) are identified and "are reasonably expected to be available" to implement the metropolitan long range transportation plan and the STIP/TIP, while providing for the operation and maintenance of the existing highway and transit systems. In addition, revenues must be "available or committed" for the first two years of a TIP/STIP in air quality nonattainment and maintenance areas [23 CFR 450.324(e) and 23 CFR 450.216(a)(5)]."

"If the projected revenues are sufficient to cover the costs, and the estimates of both revenues and costs are reasonable, then the fiscal constraint requirement has been satisfied."

"To the extent there appear to be shortfalls, the MPO or State DOT must identify a strategy to address these gaps in funding prior to the adoption of a new long-range transportation plan, TIP, or STIP - - or the amendment of an existing plan, TIP or STIP. The strategy should include a plan of action that describes the steps that will be taken to make funding available within the time frame shown in the financial plan needed to implement the projects in the long-range transportation plan. The strategy may rely upon the MPOs, transit operators, or States past record of obtaining funding. If it relies on new funding sources, the MPO, transit operator, or State must demonstrate that these funds are reasonably expected to be available."

The federal fiscal constraint planning requirements have heightened significance for Virginia. As confirmed by VTrans2025 and other evaluations, Virginia's available funding is falling short. VDOT is moving to a state highway plan project candidate selection process (evaluating congestion, safety, cost effectiveness and other factors). The process will more effectively identify pressing state highway needs relative to limited funding resources (see page 4 for details). Notably, "innovative finance" proposals are on the increase. As reflected in SAFETEA-LU, any use of federal highway funding/credit instruments (federal highway related loans/grants, TIFIA, GARVEEs or GANs) makes a project federal. The same metropolitan LRP and TIP and/or STIP processing is required as for any other federal involvement project. Finally, accurate traffic forecasting becomes especially important when tolls/tariffs are in a project's finance plan. A traffic forecast may impact not only estimations regarding a toll project's scope and financial viability (capacity-length-connections costs vs. toll revenue), but availability of funds for the advancement of other projects as well.



TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ACTIVITIES IN THE WORKS:

Non-metropolitan Local Officials- Consultation

VDOT is in the process of soliciting comments on the effectiveness of Virginia's statewide [non-metropolitan local officials' consultation process](#). The current process(es) and the numerous opportunities to communicate and consider non-metropolitan transportation planning and programming were documented in 2003. VDOT is soliciting comments through [a survey](#) that has been sent to all local government officials and Planning District Commissions to gauge the effectiveness of rural consultation in Virginia. The survey asks respondents to comment on the information exchange between PDCs, local governments and VDOT. Survey responses can be returned to TMPD via mail, fax or email. The comment period will run through November 30, 2005. For more information contact Scott Cummings at (804) 786-1893 or ScottM.Cummings@VDOT.Virginia.gov.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator



VDOT has a new State Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator. Mr. David Patton comes to the Transportation and Mobility Planning Division from Public Affairs Division. He is a long-time advocate of cycling and pedestrian issues.

It is VDOT's job to regularly incorporate accommodations for bicyclists and pedestrians in planning, programming, construction, operations, and maintenance per VDOT's March 2004 [policy for bicyclist and pedestrian accommodations](#). Activity in this area should also increase now that these features are expected in the transportation elements of local comprehensive plans (see [Code of Virginia, Section 15.2-2223](#)).

The VDOT designated State Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator oversees and coordinates activities related to the program. Primary responsibilities include providing guidance and education statewide on bicycle and pedestrian planning and design issues; assisting with the development of promotional and educational materials about bicycling and walking in Virginia; and serving as primary liaison on bicycling and pedestrian issues with other agencies, planning organizations, localities, and the public. David may be contacted at (804) 371-4869 or David.Patton@VDOT.Virginia.gov. Learn general information about current trails and related programs at the website for [bicycling and walking in VA](#).



Did You Know?

VDOT Will Have a "Safe Routes to School" Coordinator

A new [Safe Routes to School \(SR2S\) grant application program](#) was enacted in SAFETEA-LU that will further augment interest in bicycling and walking programs. Each state must identify a Safe Routes to School coordinator. The Virginia coordinator position will be in VDOT's Traffic Engineering Division. For information on developing the Safe Routes to School program contact is Mr. Mike Sawyer in VDOT's Traffic Engineering Division at email Mike.Sawyer@VDOT.Virginia.gov, or (804) 786-5004.

Virginia Transportation and Development Policies- Commission on Transportation in Urbanized Areas

Governor Warner has established a [Commission on Transportation in Urbanized Areas](#) that is expected to report findings and recommendations by December 31, 2005. Their responsibility is to examine opportunities for improving the quality of urban growth through transportation and development policies. Their mission includes establishing a framework for high quality urban transportation solutions, identifying ways for improving/supporting public transit, and evaluating existing regional land use studies to promote quality development/redevelopment.

State Highway Plan Project Candidate Selection Process in the VDOT Bulletin

The State Highway Plan project candidate selection process was featured in the October 2005 [VDOT Bulletin](#). Extra information on the process is found on the next page.



Recent Reminders:

VDOT and VDRPT Public Involvement Guide to Transportation Planning and Programming

Slightly over one hundred copies of the public involvement guide remain available for public hearings, meetings, or general distribution purposes, with more on order. Prepared in September 2004, it describes transportation planning and programming process, and guides readers in how to participate. The guide has been available at each Fall Transportation Meeting to further educate attendees on the role public participation plays in the planning process. (See the online version of the [planning and programming public involvement guide](#).) Contact Scott Cummings, Policy and Planning Specialist, VDOT Central Office TMPD, for copies or more information at (804) 786-1893.

VDOT Administrative Finance/Business and datelines for VDOT Planning Project Managers

VDOT planners are reminded to document their work consistent with the latest Workload Planning Systems account information (for VDOT'ers only) at the InsideVDOT intranet site in [Workload Planning System 6-18-03](#). We work hard, so let's make sure we document it!

VDOT planning project managers need to adhere to agency administrative process and timelines. Various actions are required each month for administration of the RTPP, SPR and MPO/PL programs. Details and appendix summary timelines are available (for VDOTers only) to review at the InsideVDOT intranet site in [the planning document library](#).

FEATURES

The State Highway Plan Project Candidate Selection Process

The VDOT Central Office recently worked with staff in the Public Affairs division to compile each VDOT District Administrator's most critical and immediate Interstate and Primary construction, maintenance, and operational needs into a report for the Commonwealth Transportation Board for use at the Fall Transportation Meetings. The needs identified by the State Highway Plan candidate selection process are being displayed at the public meetings. Related information, including a schedule of the remaining Fall Transportation Meeting times and locations, is available on the last page. Comments will be considered to develop a tentative FY2007-2012 Six Year Improvement Program by Spring, 2006. Thanks to all the planners and engineers who have assisted in this team effort.

Draft Project Management Policy and Procedures Manual

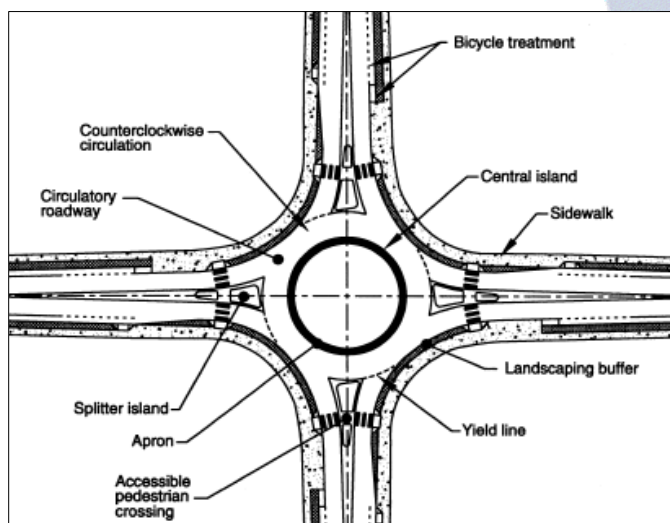
A new manual outlining policies and procedures on project management will soon be available courtesy of the VDOT Learning Center and the Project Management Office. The manual will serve as a single point source for project development requirements and contain information about the important role of planning in the project development process. The manual will also supply contact information for the various players in the project development process, including transportation planners. To read a draft copy of the manual, visit <http://insidevdot/C12/Career Development/Document Library/Project Management/PMPPM.pdf>.

Roundabouts

Walter Pribble is the new Central Office planning contact for information on roundabouts. Roundabouts are circular intersections joining two or more streets. The modern roundabout design was introduced in the 1960s to alleviate congestion and safety issues related to existing traffic circles. Drivers approaching roundabouts yield upon entry and make only right turns when entering, traveling inside and leaving a roundabout. VDOT has begun using roundabouts in certain situations to enhance safety and reduce delays encountered by the motoring public.

While roundabouts are not appropriate for all intersections, they may provide enhanced travel flow when compared to signalized intersections. Air quality is improved due to the continual movement of vehicles through the intersection. The potential for head-on and side-impact crashes is nearly eliminated as a result of the yield-at-entry design of roundabouts. Left-hand turns and u-turns are unnecessary, further reducing the potential for accidents.

In 2003, the General Assembly passed House Joint Resolution 594, encouraging the construction of roundabouts in place of signalized intersections where appropriate. That mandate, in addition to the FHWA



guidance on the application of roundabouts, has led to an increase in the number of proposed roundabout construction projects. Walter Pribble sits on the VDOT Central Office Roundabout Review Team, which works in conjunction with Districts to provide guidance and input on proposed roundabout construction projects. For assistance, brochures or additional planning information on roundabouts, contact Walter at (804) 786-2982 or Walter.Pribble@VDOT.Virginia.gov.

VDOT Planning Systems- Providing Forecasting and GIS Tools and Services

The Planning Systems section in TMPD provides travel forecasting and GIS services to planners at VDOT, Planning District Commissions, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, other State Agencies, Federal Agencies, and the Public. The two primary travel forecasting tools supported by TMPD are the Statewide Planning System (SPS) and Travel Demand Models. The modeling group within Planning Systems coordinates all travel demand modeling activities and provides modeling services where necessary. (Travel demand modeling for Northern Virginia is performed by the NOVA District planning office modeling group.) The GIS group provides GIS technical support, transportation planning data, and mapping services to planners as needed. The Planning Systems section also continues to maintain TMPD's presence on the internal and external websites.

There have been several staff changes in the Planning Systems section over the past six months. Planning Systems is in the process of filling five vacant positions. The current staff is listed below:

Section Manager - Rick Tambellini

Air Quality Program (Hampton Roads & Richmond networks):

- Mike Hester - Program Manager

Modeling Group (technical models & networks other than NOVA, Hampton Roads and Richmond):

- Paul Agnello - Modeling Manager
- Nelson Newton - Senior Modeling Analyst

GIS Group (website administration, and GIS applications and administration):

- Veronica Vaughan - GIS Analyst/Web Developer
- Carrie Saunders - GIS Analyst

Current Air Quality and Travel Forecasting Activities

1. Perform Air Quality Conformity for the Fredericksburg, Hampton-Roads, and Richmond regions
2. Providing SPS support and developing a new version of SPS
3. **Complete Travel Demand Modeling Policy and Procedures Manual. A final manual is expected by this Spring**
4. Coordinate National Personal Transportation Survey Add-On effort for Virginia
 - Surveys to support travel demand modeling and other planning activities in MPO areas
 - Survey timeframe: 2008-2009
5. Converting several MINUTP/TP+ models into CUBE Catalog format
 - MINUTP to CUBE Catalog: Fredericksburg & Charlottesville
 - TP+ to CUBE Catalog: Blacksburg-Christiansburg, Harrisonburg, Lynchburg, & Roanoke

Current GIS Activities

1. Provide GIS Support for the 2005 Functional Classification Update
2. Provide GIS Support for Statewide Planning

Contact Information

GIS & SPS: [Rick Tambellini](mailto:Rick.Tambellini@VDOT.Virginia.gov) (804) 786-7459 or Rick.Tambellini@VDOT.Virginia.gov

Travel Demand Modeling: [Paul Agnello](mailto:Paul.Agnello@VDOT.Virginia.gov) (804) 786-2531 or Paul.Agnello@VDOT.Virginia.gov



Air Quality Conformity: [Mike Hester](mailto:Michael.Hester@VDOT.Virginia.gov) (804) 371-4871 or Michael.Hester@VDOT.Virginia.gov

Additional information on TMPD's GIS, SPS, and Travel Demand Modeling activities is also available on InsideVDOT (for VDOTers only) under planners toolbox and transportation models at the [Planning](#) Link.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fall Transportation Meetings

These public meetings are being held to develop the formative six year transportation program for Virginia's fiscal years 2007-2012. For more information, or to provide on-line comments, see the information and hyperlinks at [VDOT: Six-Year Improvement Program Meetings - Fall, 2005](#).

District	Date	Location	Address	Directions
Hampton Roads	November 2	Chesapeake Conference Center	900 Greenbrier Circle Chesapeake, Va 23320	
Northern Virginia	November 10	Fairfax City Hall 3rd Floor Board Room	10455 Armstrong Ave. Fairfax, VA 22030	

Other Planning Conferences and Meetings

(Tip: It's wise to check with FHWA on new events at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/hep/calendar.htm>.)

November 1-2, Access Management Workshop, Hampton, VA. Get information at <http://www.vtrc.net/vtttc/workshops.htm>

November 16, **The 2005 Rural Transportation Planning Fall Workshop**, Twin Lakes State Park's Cedar Crest Conference Center (in Prince Edward County, Virginia, about 5 miles S.W. of Burkeville along Rt. 360). From 9 am to 3pm, this event is focused for transportation planning in the rural and small urban areas of Virginia. For info contact Peggy Todd at Peggy.Todd@VDOT.Virginia.gov or (804) 371-8867.

November 29-30, **Site Impact Analysis**, Charlottesville, VA. Get information at <http://www.vtrc.net/vtttc/workshops.htm>

December 12, **Pedestrian and Bicycle Accommodation Workshop**, Tidewater, VA. Get information at <http://www.vtrc.net/vtttc/workshops.htm>

December 12-14, **Highway Capacity Manual Workshop**, Charlottesville, VA. Get information at <http://www.vtrc.net/vtttc/workshops.htm>

January 22-26, 2006, [TRB 85th Annual Meeting](#), Washington, D.C.

Have a suggestion or contribution for The Planner's Page? Email or phone Samuel.Curling@VDOT.Virginia.gov at (804) 786-4216.

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